



## ON TARGET FOR SUCCESS

IMPACT REPORT 2018/19





# THE YEAR IN REVIEW



## Chief Executive Dr Jill Tolfrey looks back on 2018/19

**2018 marked the Charity's 75th anniversary and provided us with ample opportunity to reflect on the journey we have made as an organisation. From our roots as a fund providing financial support to bereaved families of firefighters killed during the Blitz, to the UK-wide mental health, physical health and social wellbeing charity we are today. We have come a long way since 1943 and, as has been the case for almost eight decades, we continued to move forward in 2018/19, exploring more ways in which we can support the UK's fire services community.**

The midpoint of our three year strategic plan, I am delighted to say that 2018/19 was a year of continued progress and marked success across The Fire Fighters Charity. We were able to positively progress with all of our strategic objectives; increasing the support we provide for mental health; increasing access to advice information and support; building strong, healthy and connected communities and enhancing our physical activity and rehabilitation programmes.

This, coupled with a strong year for

our fundraising and income generation teams, meant that 2018/19 put us in a strong position to realise our ambitions for the 2017-20 Strategic Plan.

Taking each of our strategic objectives in turn, we undertook a considerable amount of work in 2018/19 to review the way we support people with their mental health and how we can best use our resources to meet an increasing demand for support with issues such as trauma, stress, anxiety, loneliness and depression.

At the forefront of this work has been the development and repurposing of our Harcombe House centre, the first phase of which was completed in early September 2019, with the centre receiving a visit from HRH The Duke of Cambridge in recognition of our standing as a leading provider of integrated mental, physical and social health support for the UK's fire services community. However, the bulk of work of scoping, planning and designing the new look Harcombe House was completed in 2018/19, with builders arriving on the site in January 2019.

When fully completed Harcombe House can support up to 56 beneficiaries a week, including individuals, couples and families, providing personalised health and wellbeing support in purpose-built environments. The visit of His Royal Highness reinforced the high standing in which our support is held across the blue light sector and was a fitting tribute to the hard work – from teams across the Charity in 2018/19 – that had gone in to realising the Harcombe House vision.

In regards to increasing access to advice information and support,

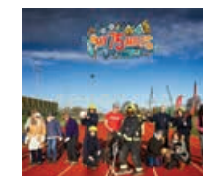
we committed to publishing regular advice and guidance on our website, overhauling sections of the site and creating new content to increase awareness of issues commonly faced by beneficiaries and the ways in which we can support them. We also complemented this with targeted messaging across our social media channels to highlight health and wellbeing initiatives and awareness days/weeks. Our Welfare Services team, meanwhile, continued to provide exceptional support to beneficiaries in need of help with their social circumstances throughout the year.

We also saw great progress with our objective to build strong, healthy and connected communities in 2018/19. The expansion and roll out of our Living Well Group programme saw eight groups launched or established across the UK. These community-based groups, run by volunteers, offer opportunities for members of the fire services community to come together, to learn about health and wellbeing initiatives, and enjoy a cup of tea. Universally well received, the scheme looks set to grow further over the coming years.

The expansion of our volunteer community also formed an important part of work towards this objective in 2018/19, with more volunteer roles being developed to support our beneficiaries and fundraising activities. This important work is set to continue and expand further over the coming years.

For beneficiaries accessing support, 2018/19 saw the continued development of an appropriate platform for our tele-rehab provision, which will help us support beneficiaries remotely.

We also spent time in 2018/19 continuing to develop our outcome



measures and looking closely at ways in which we can measure the short, medium and long term impact of our work on each individual we support, as well as on the wider health and wellbeing of the fire services community.

In conclusion, 2018/19 was a year of great success in which we continued to grow our fundraising income – overturning the annual deficit position we found ourselves in before the start of the 2017-19 Strategic Plan – and made great headway towards achieving our four strategic objectives. However, the stories of those we supported throughout the year – several of which you can read over the coming pages – tell a much better

story than I ever could of the impact we made over the 12 months, once again making a significant impact on the lives of thousands.

There's still plenty of work to do to fulfil our three year plan, but 2018/19 has given us the impetus we need to see it through and to set ourselves up for a bright future in which I am convinced we can make giant leaps towards improving the health and wellbeing of the whole fire services community.

*Jill Tolfrey*

**Dr Jill Tolfrey**  
Chief Executive

# 2018/19 AT A GLANCE

## Updates from a year of hard work and life-changing success for our services.

### The year in numbers

- 874:** Number of beneficiaries who accessed psychological support in 2018/19
- 33%:** Year-on-year increase in the number of beneficiaries primarily accessing residential support for reasons of poor mental health
- 94%:** Percentage of beneficiaries who reported positive change after accessing psychological support
- 577:** Number of beneficiaries who accessed our Welfare Services in 2018/19
- 2,865:** Number of beneficiaries who attended a residential stay at one of our centres
- 179:** Number of people who received nursing and personal care
- 7:** Number of focussed themed weeks held at our centres



### Harcombe House Reviewed, Renewed and Updated

Work began on our Devon centre, Harcombe House, in 2018/19 which is undergoing a £1.8m refurbishment, funded by the Charity and supported by a successful bid for LIBOR grant funding. This significant makeover

included development of new group and one-to-one therapy rooms, as well as recreation and breakout areas, and spaces for quiet reflection.

A new programme of integrated physical and psychological support for individuals, couples and families was also introduced at Harcombe House in January 2019, with 186 beneficiaries accessing it between January and March 2019. The personalised programme was further supported by the introduction of key workers at Harcombe House, supporting beneficiaries to identify and choose the most appropriate sessions from a flexible timetable to meet their needs.

Underpinned by a philosophy of recovery, support at Harcombe House is focused on empowering beneficiaries to regain control over their lives, using a strengths-based approach and concentrating on what people 'can do,' rather than their problems and what they 'can't do.' Key workers and practitioners therefore work in partnership with beneficiaries to identify solutions to meet their needs. The outcomes for each person supported are entirely unique to them.

### Successful art therapy trials

We trialled art therapy as a form of psychotherapy at our Marine Court and Harcombe House centres. Nine groups ran over a four-month period, with 50 beneficiaries taking part in a trial that used art media as its primary mode of

expression and communication. We also used the sessions to combine the self-care and wellbeing benefits of other therapeutic activity such as arts and crafts with the psychotherapeutic benefits of therapist-facilitated group reflection. The sessions were universally well received and, following these trials, we are now looking at how we can incorporate art therapy into the programme of support that we offer at our centres.

### Big White Wall

#### Support boosted through The Big White Wall

We partnered with The Big White Wall (TBWW), an online mental health support service, to provide our community with access to a clinically safe and anonymous online community providing peer support, personal assessment, self-help courses and live therapy. Offering support for those with an identified need who are unable to travel to one of our centres, or where a centre-based stay will not meet their needs, TBWW helped 83 beneficiaries in 2018/19.

#### More mental health awareness online

Over the course of the year we developed a range of self-management articles focusing on improving mental health and offering advice on dealing with certain situations. These were made available on our website and promoted through our social media channels. The articles covered topics such as living with bereavement, sleeping well, spotting the signs of stress and anxiety and using physical activity in the treatment of depression.

#### Nursing capacity boosted

Our Jubilee House nursing team supported 179 beneficiaries in 2018/19, an achievement all the more remarkable

as they had to work around the refurbishment of the nursing clients' accommodation at the centre. All rooms were refurbished to offer level access showers or accessible bathrooms and profiling beds.



#### Themed weeks offer new opportunities

Seven specialist, themed weeks ran across the year at our centres; including two *Love Activity*, *Hate Exercise* weeks and one carers' week. The former offered those beneficiaries attending a range of activities including walking football (thanks to a partnership opportunity with the Cumberland FA), Tai Chi, gardening, chair-based exercises, baking, active mindfulness, line dancing and new age curling. Our Carers' Week, meanwhile, offered a bespoke programme of physical and psychological activity for the carers and cared for.



#### Salaso brings exercises to life

Empowering our beneficiaries to support their onward progress after leaving one of our centres, we launched a web-based exercise app. The app –

Salaso – uses exercise prescription and engagement software to provide each user with a personalised programme of video exercises, tailored to their specific needs. Beneficiaries were introduced to the app on arrival at our centres, going on to use it throughout their stay and then continuing with it after they returned home. An effective tool for motivation and support, our practitioners have also been able to monitor each individual's progress through the app. In total, 1,601 beneficiaries used Salaso in 2018/19

#### Welfare Services clarified

We rebranded our Advice, Information and Support Service in 2018/19 to become our Welfare Service. This step was taken to give clarity around the team's remit and its impact, taking it back to its roots as a service that responds to the needs of beneficiaries experiencing unforeseen circumstances in respect to poverty, ill-health and disability need. Access to support from the Welfare Services team was also further simplified with the introduction of a new electronic financial assessment form.

#### Living Well Groups flourishing

Following successful pilot programmes, eight Living Well Groups were either newly launched or already well established in 2018/19, with around 160 people regularly attending the sessions to meet friends and former colleagues and to learn about health and wellbeing subjects.





# IN THEIR OWN WORDS

## A few of those we supported in 2018/19 share their personal experiences



### Richard Baldwin, former Royal Berkshire FRS firefighter

In 1990 I was diagnosed with an immune deficiency disease and was medically discharged from a job I'd spent 20 happy years in. My health deteriorated and I eventually had both legs amputated.

I visited Harcombe House several times and had some fantastic conversations with counsellors, opening up about things that I had previously kept to myself. They also helped me regain strength and mobility after numerous operations. The help I received was utterly vital and without it I don't think my marriage would have succeeded.

The Fire Fighters Charity has saved my life just as much as if they'd run in and dragged me out of a house fire.



### Shilla Patel, London Fire Brigade Inclusion Manager

I wasn't open about the fact I was living with depression and anxiety and my

work was being impacted. I knew I needed to do something, to take time off to drop off the side of the world and disappear for a while. I could do that at Harcombe House, without apology. I'd never put myself first in that way before.

I was worried about going because I thought people would question why I was there; not only was I not an operational firefighter but I was there for my mental health, and thought there might be a stigma. But I felt included and like I could just be myself.

I realised that when it comes to my mental health journey, I'm not alone. Mental health doesn't discriminate. It's like a fire; it doesn't choose who it will impact, it just happens, but its effect is no less devastating.



### Shona Mellon, partner to West Yorkshire firefighter

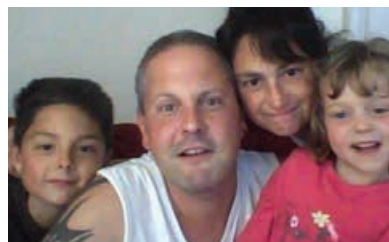
Harcombe House and the Charity holds such a special place in our hearts. Our five-year-old daughter, Isla, has complex physical and psychological health needs, so going anywhere as a family is hard as we often feel judged by people. We've been to Harcombe a couple of times on the charity's Child and Family Weeks, and it's worth every second of the seven hour drive.

These are the only breaks our family has ever been on together. We can go

there and be safe, without judging eyes, with other families who just get it. It's our happy place. Not only do we know Isla is safe there but her big brother, Oliver, can have the freedom to play with other children and be a child himself, rather than having to worry about his sister.

We've also been well supported by the Welfare Services Team, who paid for a specific piece of medical equipment that has saved Isla's life on more than one occasion, as well as transforming our garden into a safe, sensory space for the children.

We are so lucky to have the support and services of this wonderful, life-saving charity.



### George Tomes, former retained Warwickshire firefighter

I was diagnosed with MS in 2003 and had to give up work. My wife was also diagnosed with fibromyalgia. Hoping for a fresh start, we moved down to Bournemouth, but the reality was nothing like we'd hoped. Our children were bullied and our daughter, Jade, was diagnosed with renal failure and placed on the transplant list.

It felt like we had nothing. People saw us as a disabled family on benefits, so we were stigmatised. We knew we had to leave and come back to the

Midlands, but we had no money left and were stranded.

A friend suggested contacting the Charity. Not long after asking for help, we were told the Welfare Services Team would support us in helping to move home. I couldn't believe it. I hadn't been wholetime and I hadn't set foot in a fire station in years. But that didn't matter, they helped us anyway. Coming home was exactly the right thing to do, and as soon as we got out of the car, it felt right.

I am so grateful to The Fire Fighters Charity for helping us when they did. I never thought I'd be able to benefit from their help, but they really have saved my family.



### Steven Tiller, retained on-call firefighter at Halstead, Essex

I was four months into my career as a retained firefighter when I was seriously injured in a motorcycle accident. I got a phone call from my watch manager, thinking he was telling me they were letting me go, when in fact he was referring me to The Fire Fighters Charity.

I've visited Marine Court three times so far, and at each visit they've gone above and beyond in every single way for me to try and get back to who I was. Without every single part of the puzzle of people here it wouldn't work, everyone contributes to the bigger picture. The community spirit you find at the centre is so special, everyone's in a very vulnerable place but they all come together to support each other as you each try to move forwards. You can see the spark coming back in everyone's

eyes, mine included. At my latest visit, I ran for the first time in a year, which meant so much to me.

It's my dream to get back to full health and hopefully one day return to being a firefighter, but I'm just taking each day as it comes. I nearly died in that crash, then thought I'd never walk again, so I'm just happy to still be living life, one day at a time.

The Charity has genuinely changed my life, and I will always be grateful for the care I've received and the people I've met.



### James Thorpe, former London and Norfolk firefighter

You never know what's going to happen to you. You don't think you'll ever need help. I certainly never thought I would. But then I ran into the sea on the first day of my stag do in Magaluf and broke my neck, and am now paralysed from the chest down.

I remember seeing posters for The Fire Fighters Charity when I was still working, doing car washes and so on, but I didn't realise how good the facilities were and I certainly never thought I'd need to use them myself.

The facilities that are available are life-changing; it doesn't matter if it's an injury like mine or a shoulder that is playing up and stopping you from working, they change people's lives. You don't think you'll ever need it, but when you do, you're so grateful it's there. I keep going back to Jubilee House every six months or so. Mentally and physically, I wouldn't be where I am now without them.

# FUNDING THE FUTURE

## Highlights from a successful year of fundraising

2018/19 was a remarkable year for the Charity in regards to income, with some incredible individual and team fundraising, the introduction of a new online donation system, continued support from a number of trusts and some valuable one off activities. Here we take a look at some of the highlights.

### The year in numbers

- £10m:** The total income generated for the Charity throughout 2018/19
- 16%:** Year on year increase in total income
- £6.67m:** Total raised from donations and legacies
- 22%:** Year on year increase in donations and legacies
- 65,000:** Number of miles undertaken by supporters during #My75Miles campaign
- £594,000:** Amount raised from textile recycling, 15% up on 17/18
- 7.8%:** Increase in one off gifts
- 22%:** Year on year increase in merchandise sales, which raised a total of £225,000 over the year



### #My75Miles

Over the course of 2018, our 75th anniversary year, hundreds of supporters across the UK embraced our #My75Miles fundraising challenge. They raised a staggering £56,000 and covered an impressive 65,000 miles in

an incredible variety of ways; running, walking, swimming, cycling, skiing and paddling their way to their individual 75 mile goals.



### Telegraph Christmas Appeal

We were chosen by The Telegraph to be one of three charities supported by its annual Christmas Appeal in 2018/19. A two-month campaign across the newspaper's print and online editions saw us receive a large volume of editorial coverage, focussed primarily on the mental health support we provide to members of the UK's fire services community. The campaign asked readers to donate and included a widely promoted telethon day. It culminated in a cheque presentation for £148,234.44.

### A good year for donations and legacies

A modest growth in the number of people regularly donating to the Charity meant that we saw a slight increase in the amount of income from committed giving over the duration of 2018/19. However, a successful bid for LIBOR funding to support the redevelopment of Harcombe House, coupled with income received from the legacy donations of people who had left a gift to us in their wills, meant that the total income for this area of the business rose by 22% in 2018/19, to £6.67m.

### Hundreds make the switch

We kicked off a campaign in 2018/19 to encourage regular donors to make the switch from a regular payroll donation to a regular direct debit donation. Working with current donors in 2018/19, over 400 people made the switch to direct debit, with donations valued at over £34,000 a year, including Gift Aid.

### Online donations easier than ever

We introduced a new, mobile friendly online donation platform on our website in March 2018, which made it simpler and quicker for supporters to donate via direct debit on a one off or regular basis. Also, in March 2019 we introduced recurring PayPal and credit/debit card options to give donors more choice in regards to how they wished to manage their donations.

### Thousands join Lottery

We recruited over 4,000 new Lottery players in 2018/19, with almost 3,000 new public players joining the monthly draw. Our monthly prize fund also rose on average by over £1,000 a month, climbing to £22,057 in March 2019.

### Facebook fundraising takes off

In June 2018 we signed up to Facebook's personal fundraisers tool, which enables people to raise money for charities through Facebook. Similarly, we promoted Facebook's birthday fundraiser tool which allows individuals to set up micro-fundraising pages for their birthdays, through which they can ask friends and family to donate. In 2018/19 over 1,500 supporters chose to fundraise for us through Facebook and raised almost £23,000.



### Sainsbury's Charity of The Year

In August 2018, supporters' votes meant that we were named Charity of The Year across 20 Sainsbury's stores around the UK, from Sudbury in Suffolk to Hamilton in Scotland.



### London Marathoners raise thousands

Our 2018 London Marathoners raised a staggering £108,782.62 (exc Gift Aid) for us, battling record breaking heat in the Capital to do so.

### Fabulous festive fundraising

Our Christmas Fundraising Campaign 2018 saw stations and individuals across the country together raise over £161,000 through an array of bucket collections, Santa sleigh rides, bake sales and Christmas grottos. This fantastic sum was 14% up on Christmas 2017.



## Grants from our trust supporters

Once again, we received some valuable support from trusts and foundations over the course of 2018/19. Their generosity has enabled us to continue to invest in our services and to plan for the future.

- The **de Brye Charitable Trust** kindly donated £2,000 to support firefighters injured or in need of psychological support.
- The **Hospital Saturday Fund Charitable Trust** donated £3,000 to fund equipment for the support of the nursing team at Jubilee House.
- The **CSIS** generously donated £10,000 towards supporting the development and further roll out of our Living Well Groups.

Other trusts who kindly donated to us in 2018/19 included:

- The Ballinger Charitable Trust
- The Chimes Family Charitable Trust
- The David Solomons Charitable Trust
- Donald Forrester Trust
- Ernest Hecht Charitable Foundation
- The Helianthus Charitable Trust
- The Isaacs Charitable Trust
- The Isabel Blackman Foundation
- The James Wise Charitable Trust
- The Lord Belstead Charitable Trust
- Maud Elkington Charitable Trust
- The Privy Purse Charitable Trust
- Sylvia Aitken Charitable Trust
- Westfield Health Charitable Trust
- The Zochonis Charitable Trust



# LOOKING AHEAD

## Chair of The Fire Fighters Charity Trustee Board, Andrew Lynch, on how 2018/19 will help to drive us forward over the next few years

Today, as we reflect on the impact that the mid-point year of our 2017-20 strategic plan has had, it's important to look to the years ahead and the potential long term impact of the work we undertake today. The achievements of teams across the Charity and the success of our income generation strategy has meant that we are firmly on target to deliver all of our strategic objectives. Indeed, by the end of the plan I am confident that we will have increased the support we provide for mental health; we will have increased access to advice information and support; we will have built strong, healthy and connected communities and we will have enhanced our physical activity and rehabilitation programmes.

Over the last year of our plan, 2019/20, our most significant body of work will be in relation to further increasing and enhancing our mental health support services. Central to this will be the continued development of Harcombe House, with the main building being sensitively redesigned to make best use of the internal space. This will see the creation of new family areas, recreational space, small group space and larger areas for therapeutic interventions.

This significant investment reinforces our commitment to providing the best possible mental health and wellbeing support to those in need across the fire services community, and I am sure this will extend well beyond 2019/20 as we

look to support more people, in more timely and appropriate ways.

Indeed, it is vital as we approach the end of one strategic plan, that work begins on the next and that the two concurrent plans segue seamlessly together. To this end we are, in 2019/20, studying the trends in service demand and delivery that we have seen over the past year to determine our direction of travel for the next few years.

In regards to growth, it has been hugely encouraging this year to see more people coming to us for support and, similarly, our fundraising teams have worked hard to reach more people, encouraging them to donate and take part in initiatives such as #My75Miles – a challenge I took part in myself. However, we also know that we are still only really talking to a small fraction of our potential beneficiary base. There are many thousands of people out there who may not even be aware of their status as beneficiaries of the Charity and therefore of how they could benefit from our

support. So I am confident that work to extend our reach and to tell more people about the many and varied ways we can help them will continue into the future.

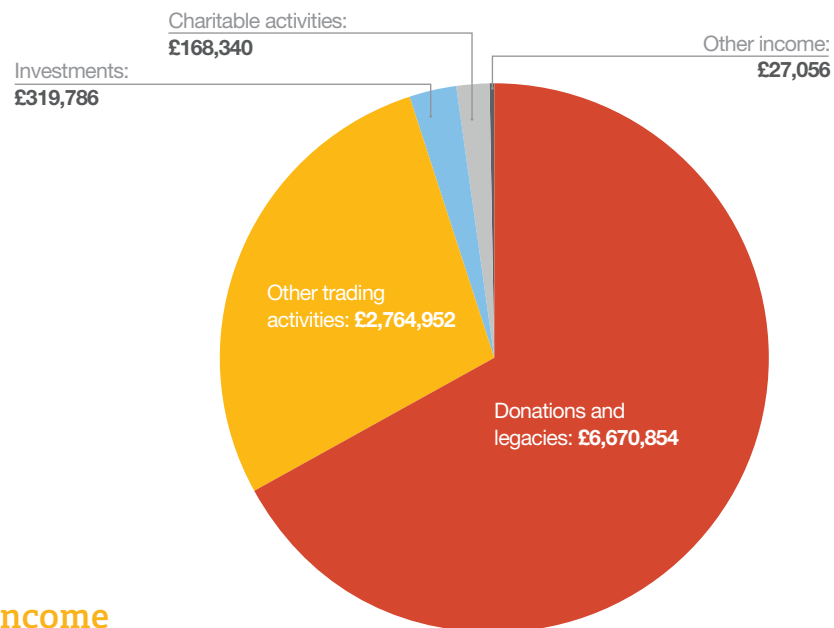
Finally, on behalf of the Board of Trustees, I must take this opportunity to thank the Charity's employees and volunteers for their hard work and dedication over the last year. Looking ahead, it is they who will drive the future of our Charity and, as ever, I have

complete faith in their ability to do so. Indeed, with our people - including our volunteers - supporters and beneficiaries working together in the year ahead and beyond, I am sure that The Fire Fighters Charity will continue to go from strength to strength.

**Andrew Lynch**  
Chair



# OUR FINANCES



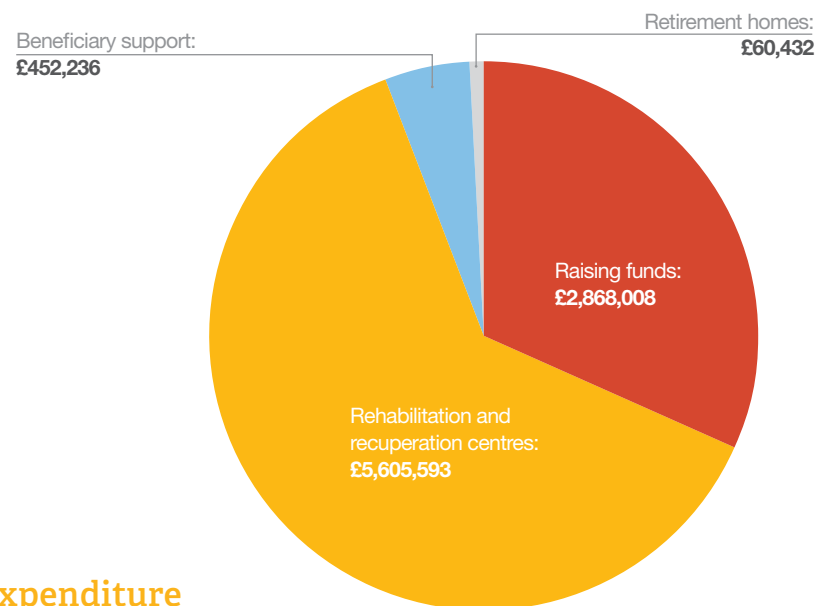
## Income

Total incoming resources of £9,950,988 were generated during the year, an increase of £1,399k or 16% on the £8,551,804 raised in 2017/18.

Donations and legacies raised were £6,670,854, which was £1,194,211 more than 2017/18. The majority of the 22% increase in 2018/19 was achieved through one-off gift income; individuals or organisations increased giving by £186,370 or 7.8%, legacy income was £304,058 greater than 2017/18 and grant income was up £665,863. The growth in grant income related to government funding from the

LIBOR scheme in support of the development of Harcombe House.

Income from other trading activities grew by £152k to £2,764,952. The promotion of the Charity Lottery to the general public continued to be a great success in 2018/19; additionally, campaigns highlighting the opportunity to increase the funding of services by simply converting from the lottery to regular giving also continued to prove successful. The net result of this activity was that lottery income grew by £85k to £1,352,148.



## Expenditure

Total expenditure for the year was £8,986,269 compared with £8,255,294 for last year, an 8.9% or £731k increase.

Expenditure on charitable activities increased by £529k to £6,118,261. Expenditure at our rehabilitation and recuperation centres increased by £484k, this was predominantly due to the development of Harcombe House and the introduction of a new mental health provision from January 2019. There was also a positive increase in expenditure this year on solutions provided

to individuals by the welfare services team.

Expenditure on raising funds increased by £202k in 2018/19 to £2,868,008. This 8% increase has supported the continued growth in income while also strengthening foundations for further growth in 2019/20 and beyond: the biggest growth area has been the cost of increasing the number of lottery players from the general public, this expenditure will also benefit future years.



# Keep in touch

Support Line: 0800 389 8820

Customer Care: 01256 366566

Email: [customercare@firefighterscharity.org.uk](mailto:customercare@firefighterscharity.org.uk)



The Fire Fighters Charity



@firefighters999



thefirefighterscharity

Address: The Fire Fighters Charity, Level 6 Belvedere  
House, Basing View, Basingstoke, RG21 4HG



Registered office: The Fire Fighters Charity, Level 6, Belvedere, Basing View, Basingstoke, Hampshire, RG21 4HG  
Charity registered in England and Wales (1093387) and Scotland (SC040096)

Royal Patron: Her Majesty The Queen